

Detroit/ River Rouge Oil Spill Unified Command News Release

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Shore cleaning, waterfowl rescue focus of response efforts

Cities of River Rouge, Ecorse, Wyandotte, Riverview and Trenton targeted

DETROIT - The United States Coast Guard, U.S. EPA and state agencies have been responding to an oil spill of unknown origin since Wednesday. Pollution response teams have shown only scattered impacted shoreline downstream communities in your community along the Detroit River, however, we have observed small patches of standing oil natural collection points and around boat slips in the water that abuts the shoreline of your community.

We have hired Marine Pollution Control (MPC), an oil spill cleanup contractor, to remove any standing oil in the water that may be in the vicinity of your community's shoreline. MPC will be performing cleanup operations between 7:00AM and 7:00PM beginning on Saturday, April 13, 2002 by boat. They will start from the mouth of the River Rouge and work their way south along the west bank of the Detroit River from the City of River Rouge through the City of Trenton. Any standing pockets of oil will be removed. MPC may leave oil containment devices on site that will not interfere with property usage. These devices are used to monitor and collect standing oil and in all cases they would be removed within a week.

DETROIT – More than 90 emergency responders from a range of local, state and national agencies are working together to contain the spill, clean it up, and track down the source or sources of the spilled oil. Estimates are that between 1,000 and 5,000 gallons of oil were discharged into the water, taking in 17 miles of shoreline along both the American and Canadian mainland, and around Grosse Ile.

The workers and agencies involved include:

- 40 workers from clean-up contractor Marine Pollution Control
- 3 officials from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- 4 people from Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- 2 scientists with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- 12 officials with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- 6 hazardous material responders from the U.S. Coast Guard National Strike Force-Atlantic
- 36 U.S. Coast Guard personnel from local, regional, and district offices around the Great Lakes
- 2 investigators with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-assessing impact on shorebirds

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Seeking a source

Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency representatives are examining oil samples to map the oil's 'fingerprint' and to help pinpoint possible sources. No single source of the spilled oil has been identified; it appears to be an industrial-grade oil, and is 'weathered,' or used.

Polluting the environment is a crime. Civil and criminal penalties may apply if a responsible party is found. U.S. law caps civil penalties at \$27,500 per violation per day. In addition, responsible parties are required to pay the entire cost of the clean-up, which is expected to tally well over \$100,000.

Impact on shore life

Investigators from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are on-scene to assess the oil's impact on wildlife, especially geese and ducks. Citizens are asked to avoid all contact with the oil; wildlife recovery specialists will collect struggling waterfowl and other wildlife over the next few days.

Citizens should avoid boating in the Detroit River anywhere south of the River Rouge.

For more information, contact the Joint Information Center at (313) 568-9486.